

In reply to the rejection, Applicant (1) first clarifies which of Lightner's rollers can qualify as the driven roller of claims 1 and 10 and (2) explains why Lightner fails to disclose or suggest the overlap-amount limiter of claims 1 and 10.

(1) Lightner's forwarding rollers 34 (and reversing rollers 36) are not driven rollers as recited in claims 1 and 10. Lightner discloses a skimmer roller assembly 21 with forwarding rollers 34 and reversing rollers 36 (col. 9, lines 36-38). Lightner does not identify the forwarding rollers 34 or the reversing rollers 36 as drive rollers or driven rollers.

Page 3 of the Office Action asserts that the forwarding rollers 34 correspond to the driven rollers of claims 1 and 10. This is not correct because Lightner's forwarding roller 34 and not displaceable (claims 1 and 10 recite driven rollers that are displaceable). For the purposes of controlling a gap or space between the forwarding rollers 34 and the reversing rollers 36, the reversing rollers 36 are adjustable with respect to the forwarding rollers 34 (Fig. 8 and col. 10, lines 66 - col. 11, line 3).

(2) Lightner and JP '749 fail to disclose or suggest a feeding device with an overlap-amount limiter that includes a contact portion that is positioned within an annular recess of a drive roller and which is, during absence of a recording medium between the drive roller and a driven roller, held in contact at a surface thereof with a radially outer end portion of the driven roller, as recited in claim 1 and as similarly recited in claim 10.

As discussed above, the position of the forwarding rollers 34 is fixed and only the reversing rollers 36 are adjustable. Lightner fails to provide any disclosure or suggestion with regard to any structure that is (1) positioned within an annular recess of a drive roller or the forwarding rollers 34 and (2) held in contact at a surface thereof with a radially outer end portion of the reversing rollers 36 during an absence of a recording medium between the forwarding rollers 34 and the reversing rollers 36.

The Office Action identifies Lightner's fingers 73 as corresponding to the overlap-amount limiter of claims 1 and 10. However, Lightner's fingers 73 and guide plate 66 are not held in contact at a surface thereof with a radially outer end portion of the reversing rollers 36 during an absence of a recording medium. The guide plate 66 is held in pressing contact with the forwarding rollers 34 by the coil spring 76 (col. 10, lines 42-46). Each of the fingers 73 provided in the guide plate 66 is limited by the forwarding rollers 34 from its displacement, rather than limiting displacement or overlap amount of the forwarding rollers 34.

JP '749 also fails to disclose or suggest the overlap-amount limiter of claims 1 and 10. JP'749 discloses a spur 16 (driven roller) (Fig. 4A). However, JP'749 fails to disclose an overlap-amount limiter that is held in contact at a surface thereof with a radially outer end portion of the spur 16, during an absence of the recording medium. If sheet material does not exist between the friction body 20 and the spur 16, the contact end of the spur 16 is kept from coming into contact with the friction body 20 (Abstract).

Furthermore, because Lightner's forwarding rollers 34 are not displaceable, the biaser of JP '749 does not function as a biaser as recited in claims 1 and 10.

It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Lightner in view of JP '749 and Rider et al. (Rider), U.S. Patent No. 5,653,439, claim 7 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Lightner in view of JP '749 and Bekki, U.S. Patent No. 5,606,357, claims 12 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Lightner in view of JP '749 and Uchikata, U.S. Patent No. 5,961,234, and claims 14 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Lightner in view of JP '749, Uchikata and Asano et al. (Asano), U.S. Patent No. 5,291,224. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

Rider, Bekki, Uchikata and Asano fail to overcome deficiencies of Lightner and JP '749 as applied to claims 1 and 10. It is respectfully requested that the rejections be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,


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Attachment:
Petition for Extension of Time

Date: July 6, 2006

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